GlobalResearch
Center for Research on Globalization

Washington Wages War on International Soccer

By Stephen Lendman
Global Research, May 28, 2015

Region: USA

Is there more to what's going on than meets the eye? In January 2011, FIFA president Sepp Blatter and Russian Sports minister Vitaly Mulko signed a declaration on Russia's official status as 2018 World Cup host nation.

At the time, Vladimir Putin said Russia would "use the experience...already gained in preparing for the Sochi Olympics in 2014."

Blatter expressed "certain(ty) that the World Cup (would) be held at the highest level and...turn into a truly magnificent event."

Russia won out over Britain, the Netherlands, Spain and Portugal. It plans to host the event in 13 cities. It intends making it first-class world event.

In April, 13 US influential senators wrote Blatter "strongly encourag(ing)" him to replace Russia with another host country," saying:

> "Allowing Russia to host the FIFA World Cup inappropriately bolsters the prestige of the Putin regime at a time when it should be condemned and provides economic relief at a time when much of the international community is imposing economic sanctions."

FIFA spokeswoman Delia Fischer responded, saying:

> "History has shown so far that boycotting sport events or a policy of isolation or confrontation are not the most effective ways to solve problems."

The World Cup "can achieve positive change in the world, but football cannot be seen as a solution for all issues, particularly those related to world politics."

Blatter said "the World Cup in Russia will be able to stabilize all the situation in this region of Europe that is suffering now."

Is charging 14 current and former FIFA officials with various criminal offenses a thinly veiled scheme to continue bashing and trying to isolate Russia?

Everything done so far failed. Master chess player Putin outmatches his US counterpart. However charges against current and former FIFA officials are resolved, expect Russia to remain 2018 World Cup nation likely matching its successful 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics.

Another issue is Israel. Palestinian officials want it suspended from FIFA participation

because of systematically violating Palestinian footballer rights – including harassment, travel restrictions, lawless arrests, and other racist apartheid actions.

Last March, the Palestinian Football Federation (PFA) submitted a motion to FIFA calling for Israel's suspension until it complies with the following conditions:

- letting football participants and all equipment related to the sport move freely in, out and within Palestine;
- no longer obstruct or otherwise prevent the building and maintenance of Palestinian football facilities;
- banning football clubs in illegal Israeli settlements from Israeli Football Federation (IFA) competitions;
- requiring IFA to take firm action to eliminate racist, apartheid practices within its own leagues; and
- requiring IFA to recognize the PFA as the sole governing body for football within Palestine.

These conditions address longstanding grievances – so far without resolution. Palestinian officials say suspending Israel is needed to change things.

Instead of going after war criminals, CIA and Pentagon torturers, banker mega-crooks, other corporate thieves, corrupt politicians on the take, dirty cops, and other major US offenders demanding prosecution, Washington targeted the Zurich, Switzerland-based International Federation of Association Football (FIFA) outside its jurisdiction.

It's pressuring Swiss authorities to extradite FIFA officials to America to face criminal corruption charges.

The timing of the indictments and arrests wasn't coincidental – two days before FIFA's annual general meeting with its officials in one place at a luxury Zurich hotel.

Blatter is up for reelection. So far he's not charged. According to US officials, he's not cleared yet. Whether what's ongoing affects his reelection remains to be seen.

A 47-count indictment charges 14 individuals with racketeering, bribery, wire fraud and money laundering among other offenses as part of "a 24-year scheme to enrich themselves through the corruption of international soccer," according to the Justice Department.

Attorney General Loretta Lynch said "(t)he indictment spans at least two generations of soccer officials who, as alleged, have abused their positions of trust to acquire millions of dollars in bribes and kickbacks."

"Today's action makes clear that this Department of Justice intends to end any such corrupt practices, to root out misconduct, and to bring wrongdoers to justice – and we look forward to continuing to work with other countries in this effort."

America and Switzerland have an extradition treaty. A Swiss judge will decide what happens

next. Even if extradition is ordered, individuals affected can appeal.

So-called "dual criminality" is a requirement many countries observe – namely that crimes alleged by one nation are recognized as such by the other before extradition can be considered.

The legal process in this case is expected to take months to work its way through Switzerland's judicial process – maybe much longer if appeals are made.

Some earlier cases dragged on for years. If extradition is rejected, Washington would likely issue so-called "red notices" to authorities in other countries – meaning individuals charged would risk arrest and extradition to America if they travel abroad.

According to international law experts, Switzerland is one of the world's toughest places to win extradition cases – especially on tax related charges.

Some high-profile individuals successfully contested US extradition requests – notably film director Roman Polanski.

Russia's Foreign Ministry responded sharply to Washington's indictments – saying it extended its legal authority improperly "far beyond its borders."

> "Without going into the details of the accusations…this is clearly another case of illegal extraterritorial use of US law."
>
> "We hope that this will not in any way be used to cast a shadow on the international football organization as a whole and its decisions."
>
> "Once again we are calling on Washington to stop attempts to make justice far beyond its borders using its legal norms and to follow the generally accepted international legal procedures."

Putin called FIFA indictments "an obvious attempt to spread (US) jurisdiction to other states (and) prevent Mr. Blatter's reelection…which is a gross violation of the principle of functioning international organizations."

"(T)he United States has no relation to" FIFA affairs. The individuals charged "are not US citizens, and if some event has taken place, it happened not on US soil…"

FIFA and Olympic competition are more about profiteering, exploitation and corruption than sport. Yet little is done to change things.

So why now? Why target FIFA – especially at this time? Draw your own conclusions.

Stephen Lendman lives in Chicago. He can be reached at lendmanstephen@sbcglobal.net.

His new book as editor and contributor is titled "Flashpoint in Ukraine: US Drive for Hegemony Risks WW III."

http://www.claritypress.com/LendmanIII.html

Visit his blog site at sjlendman.blogspot.com.

Listen to cutting-edge discussions with distinguished guests on the Progressive Radio News Hour on the Progressive Radio Network.

It airs three times weekly: live on Sundays at 1PM Central time plus two prerecorded archived programs.

The original source of this article is Global Research
Copyright © Stephen Lendman, Global Research, 2015

Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page

Become a Member of Global Research

Articles by: Stephen Lendman

About the author:

Stephen Lendman lives in Chicago. He can be reached at lendmanstephen@sbcglobal.net. His new book as editor and contributor is titled "Flashpoint in Ukraine: US Drive for Hegemony Risks WW III." http://www.claritypress.com/LendmanIII.html Visit his blog site at sjlendman.blogspot.com. Listen to cutting-edge discussions with distinguished guests on the Progressive Radio News Hour on the Progressive Radio Network. It airs three times weekly: live on Sundays at 1PM Central time plus two prerecorded archived programs.

Disclaimer: The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: publications@globalresearch.ca

www.globalresearch.ca contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: publications@globalresearch.ca